

CONNECTICUT STATE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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February 21, 2022

Honorable Chairs, Sen. Osten, and Representative Horn, Vice-Chair Paolillo, and Ranking Members Sen. Champagne, Representative Howard, Members of the Public Safety & Security Committee

My name is John Carew, Legislative Representative for the Connecticut State Firefighters Association (CSFA). The CSFA represents more than 25,000 career and volunteer firefighters in Connecticut. The Association respectfully submits our comments on several bills that are scheduled for today's public hearing:

HB 5173 An Act Allowing A Personal Income Tax Deduction For Stipends Paid To Volunteer Firefighters And Volunteer Ambulance Members.

The CSFA supports this legislation as currently written, as it because it appears to strengthen current Federal legislation the "Volunteer Responder Incentive Protection Act (VRIPA) passed by U.S. Congress in December 2020. Currently VRIPA exempts nominal volunteer recruitment and retention incentives from being subject to federal income tax and reporting requirements as well as exempting property tax benefits and up to \$600 per year in other incentives, such as stipends, that volunteer fire and EMS personnel receive as a reward for their service. Any legislation that further serves to help retain, recruit and benefit those who volunteer for local Fire programs, are fully supported by the CSFA.

HB 5176 An Act Concerning A Study Of The Powers, Duties, Benefits And Classification Of First Responders

The CSFA respectfully, and happily volunteers our expertise and experience for this study group, as our membership both lifelong Career and Volunteer alike, can bring firsthand knowledge on the intended scope of the Study.

SB 132 An Act Concerning The Sale & Use of Consumer Grade Fireworks

The CSFA strongly opposes this legislation as the introduction of consumer grade fireworks will undoubtedly lead to an increase in risk of fires, injury, and hospitalizations statewide.

Throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, many municipalities canceled public fireworks displays, which may have spurred consumers to use fireworks typically illegally purchased and possessed, on their own throughout the State. A 2020 study by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) finds a 50 percent increase in deaths and injuries from fireworks-related incidents in 2020, compared to 2019. Most fireworks-related injuries (about 66 percent) occurred in the month surrounding the July 4th holiday (from June 21, 2020 to July 21, 2020).